

A Battle of Attrition Between Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Battleground: Hadramawt

(Translated)

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What ignited the recent events in Hadramawt Governorate was the announcement on November 21, 2025, of granting the American company Jannah Hunt Oil Company (JHOC) the right to operate oil sector 5 in Shabwa Governorate, near Hadramawt, after its production had ceased since October 2022. This coincided with the increasing control of the Saudi-backed Hadramawt Tribal Alliance, which had established forces and begun expanding its influence, threatening British proxies. In response, on November 26, 2025, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council forces, supported by Britain, launched a military offensive, dubbed “Promising Future,” to seize control of the First Military Region in Seiyun, Hadramawt Valley, ostensibly to combat terrorism and arms smuggling. The Hadramawt Tribal Alliance forces, led by Amr bin Habrish al-Alī, head of the Hadramawt Inclusive Conference, swiftly stormed the oil fields of the PetroMasila company on November 29, 2025. However, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces continued their advance towards them, aiming to extend their control over Hadramawt and the neighboring Al-Mahra Governorate. This prompted the arrival of a Saudi committee led by Mohammed al-Qahtani and the establishment of a local mediation committee to prevent military clashes between the STC forces and Amr bin Habrish al-Alī. On December 9, 2025, the STC announced its complete control over Wadi Hadramawt and the neighboring Al-Mahra Governorate. This led Saudi Arabia to send a second team, with Emirati participation, to Aden on Friday, December 12, 2025, to discuss arrangements with the STC for the return of its forces to their original positions after handing over the camps to the Homeland Shield Forces. The Southern Transitional Council was also urged to adhere to the recommendations of the 2019 Riyadh Conference.

The Southern Transitional Council forces' refusal to withdraw from their positions in Wadi Hadramawt prompted Riyadh to mobilize 20,000 Homeland Shield Forces troops in Al-Wadi'ah and Al-Abr, Hadramawt Governorate, on December 20, 2025. This deployment was met with assurances of support from Abu Dhabi for the STC. Then, on December 25, 2025, Riyadh resorted to force again, stating in a statement issued by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs that “this could have dire consequences.” A third time, on December 27, 2025, Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman declared, “It is time for the Southern Transitional Council to withdraw its forces from the camps in Hadramawt and Al-Mahra.” On December 29, 2025, Riyadh set a deadline for the Southern Transitional Council forces to return to their original positions. Two separate drone attacks resulted in the death and injury of soldiers; one targeting Hadrami Elite Forces in Wadi Nahib, and the other targeting Southern Transitional Council soldiers in Khashm al-Ayn. These attacks are believed to have been orchestrated by Riyadh.

In a surprising development, on Tuesday, December 30, 2025, the head of the eight-member Presidential Council declared a 90-day state of emergency in Yemen and canceled the joint defense agreement with the UAE, demanding that all Emirati forces withdraw from Yemen within 24 hours. Meanwhile, the coalition bombed weapons and armored vehicles at the port of Mukalla in Hadramawt after they arrived on two ships from Fujairah. Al-Alimi requested the entry of Saudi forces into Hadramawt under the pretext of protecting civilians. Tariq Afash, Abdul Rahman al-Mahrami, and Faraj al-Bahsani joined forces with Aidarus al-Zubaidi. Al-Alimi's resignation was due to significant Saudi pressure; whenever Saudi pressure increased, Britain, through its other arm, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), would mobilize.

Looking at the sequence of political events over the past month following the STC's entry into Hadramawt Governorate, Riyadh, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued a statement on Thursday, December 25, 2025, indicating that “the military movements in the governorates of Hadramawt and al-Mahra recently undertaken by the Southern Transitional Council were carried out unilaterally without the approval of the Presidential Leadership Council or coordination with the coalition leadership.” The statement added, “We rely on the Southern Transitional Council's initiative to end the escalation and for its

forces to withdraw smoothly and urgently from the eastern governorates of Hadramawt and al-Mahra." The following day, the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement affirming its "role in serving the interests of the Yemeni people and fulfilling their legitimate aspirations for stability and prosperity." It also reiterated its commitment "to supporting all efforts that contribute to strengthening stability and development in Yemen, which will positively impact the security and prosperity of the region." Statements were subsequently issued by Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

The sequence of events, beginning on November 18, 2025, with the visit of British Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (MENAP), Hamish Faulkner, to Aden, followed by Mohammed bin Salman's visit to Washington, then the decision on November 21, 2025, to hand over the Oil Sector 5 in Shabwa to the Jannah Hunt Oil Company within a week, the launch of Operation Promising Future on November 26, 2025, and the entry of Amr bin Habrish al-Alii's forces into the PetroMasila oil fields on November 29, 2025, leaves no doubt that they are all interconnected with the primary objective being the race for oil in eastern Yemen.

The Southern Transitional Council's deployment of its forces to the governorates of Hadramawt and Al-Mahra undermines the roadmap agreed upon in 2023. Arrangements were underway to begin a new round of negotiations between Sana'a and Aden after a postponement imposed by Operation Decisive Storm. This move further delays granting the Houthis, who are present but absent from the events in Hadramawt and Al-Mahra, legitimacy to govern in Sana'a. Instead, it pushes southern Yemen toward fragmentation, potentially losing parts of it, beyond the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

The Southern Transitional Council's project is a revival of the British colonialist conflict, now being waged through the UAE, and the American ambitions of Riyadh under Salman and his son Mohammed. It undoubtedly evokes past colonialist conflicts, such as those of June 26, 1978, and January 13, 1986. The only remaining option for the people of Yemen is to return to their former state of Iman, wisdom, and Fiqh. America, which feigns no involvement in the events in Hadramawt, is the same America whose company, the Pan American Petroleum and Transport Company, drilled an exploratory oil well in Thamud, Hadramawt, in 1960. It is also the same America that is working today to bypass the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, redirecting oil trade eastward toward the Indian and Pacific Oceans instead of the usual route through the Atlantic.

What does the appearance of a British minister after 58 years of nominal independence signify?

The events are unfolding in both Hadramawt and Al-Mahra Overlooking the Arabian Sea, and close to the ongoing conflict in the Red Sea, the desire to control the Arabian Sea is linked to Abu Dhabi's acquisition of Socotra Island and the Yemeni islands of Mayyun and Zuqar as well as the Jewish intelligence presence there. The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) of the Jewish entity has revealed the true dimensions of the Southern Transitional Council's control over Hadramawt and the southern governorates. The Council is prepared to normalize relations with the Jewish entity and join the Abraham Accords in exchange for political and security support for the secession of southern Yemen.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are acting as proxies in the fragmentation of Yemen, believing themselves immune to becoming victims of a similar fate. The fragmentation of Iraq and Yemen makes Najd and the Hejaz the third country on the path to disintegration, a plan conceived with the launch of the so-called "crusade" against Islam and Muslims in 2001. As for the UAE, teeming with expatriate workers whose numbers exceed its own population by nine times, it has exposed itself to dangers that neither its continued service to Western colonialist policies nor its close ties with the Jewish entity can prevent. It is strange that Hadramawt stands like a lost soul, unwilling to submit to either Sana'a's authority or that of the Southern Transitional Council. Yet, Saudi Arabia also aspires to annex it, just as it annexed the Ottoman province of Asir from Yemen following the 1934 war.

The problem for the people of Hadramawt, and Yemen in general, lies in being ruled by those unworthy of the title of ruler. These individuals are embroiled in the international conflict over Yemen, brought in by those who fear the resurgence of Islam within a unified political entity. Meanwhile, the righteous and devout remain marginalized, lacking any active role in the political arena until they enter the fray and work towards the revival of Islamic way of life by establishing the Second Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly-Guided Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood.